

Baird: A harried mom's wine

By Esther C. Baird/ The Baird Facts
Thursday, October 26, 2006

Errands. With a toddler. Sigh. I try to go into a zen-like state for daily shopping occurrences otherwise I'd go crazy. Eighty percent of every errand is spent trying to get my 2-year-old to hold my hand, to not touch, to not take things off the shelf, to stay put, to come back, to stay calm - wait, that last one might be what I tell myself. Strollers are soooo age one-and-a-half. Two-year-olds can walk by themselves thank you very much. Except for grocery stores with the cart-cars, no store is safe.

Recently I was purchasing some wine, something I do on an almost weekly basis, in a local liquor store. It had decent space, but unless you are selling your wine on a football field, there is never enough space for a toddler. It's one thing at say, Target, if my daughter gleefully runs over to the bath section and shows me how she knows her colors. "Mommy, this is a red towel! This is yellow!" She cries as she picks up each towel in and flaps it with excitement. I can dutifully reinforce that we don't touch while I refold the towels but no real catastrophe has occurred. Nothing has broken.

No so when demonstrating colors of red versus white bottles in a liquor store. To that end browsing in a liquor store with a toddler is not an option. It's a mad dash. Quick in! Over to the back left corner where our favorite red is! Quick scoot to the side to grab the preferred white! Race back to the register! There is no time to consider new labels. It's a race and time is measured in toddler's grabby fingers.

At this store, by the time I had wrangled three bottles and my daughter to the cash register I was running thin on patience. I had resorted to carrying my 32-pound daughter who was . . . resisting. I struggled to find my wallet with only one hand while a line of customers stood behind me and my escalating situation. Finally, I fumbled out my credit card along with my I.D. - always hopeful that I might look youthful enough to warrant it. Dream on.

The clerk never glanced at I.D. while bagging the bottles. Instead she tried to gamely chat up my daughter. "Are you helping mommy shop?" My daughter scowled. "I bet mommy loves you to help her like such a good girl." I scowled. "What are you helping mommy buy today?" This time my daughter stopped squirming - she seemed to know that she had a captive audience. Pointing to the remaining bottle of white wine she exclaimed with a darling, revived charm, "I help buy mommy's Juice!" Well. The store customers behind me exploded in laughter.

Two men ribbed each other. "Did you hear that? Mommy's Juice! Heh heh."

"That's right little girl, we all need our juice. Har har. Juice is good for everyone!"

I smiled weakly, relieved to no longer be the object of everyone's irritation, but also wishing I could just sink into the floor. Instead of sinking, I had to continue to hold my now beaming daughter while I swung the bag holding the three bottles of 'juice' onto my other hip. Weighted down like a pack animal I shuffled out to the car wondering when it'd be evening so I could open my new purchases.

This is all I'm saying: I know there is a lot of heated debate about the upcoming vote for Question 1 on the November ballot. I get that emotions run high when we talk about alcohol. I've read the literature, press releases and editorials featured on both sides' Web sites. I know, for many, the issue extends much deeper than personal shopping convenience. But I've also lived most of my life outside of Massachusetts - in multiple states - all of which allow wine to be sold in grocery stores.

While I wasn't carded at our local liquor store, I am always carded when I am back in the grocery stores that do sell wine. Let's be honest. I don't even look close to 21 anymore. Being carded is a credit to the grocery store's diligence about checking I.D.s, not to my appearance.

I've already touted my love of grocery shopping in our local stores that have the cart-cars. It'd be near blissful if I could throw in my laundry detergent, chicken, wine, cookies, milk and bread and be done for the week. See how easily I slipped wine into that list? I bet my daughter wouldn't even notice at all. And juice could just stay juice.

Esther Baird is a Beverly resident. Her column appears regularly in the Citizen. If you have any suggestions or comments about The Baird Facts please contact Esther Baird at: esther@estherbaird.com, or visit her Web site at www.estherbaird.com.